The specimen is lodged in the Western Australian Museum (M13348). A full report on the survey will be published in the Wildlife Research Bulletin.

—A. A. BURBIDGE and N. L. McKENZIE, W.A. Wildlife Research Centre, Wanneroo.

Incubation Period of the Pied Honeyeater, *Certhionyx variegatus.*—Recently the opportunity occurred to record within very narrow limits, the incubation period of the Pied Honeyeater. At 13.00 hours on August 31, 1975, a completed nest, later identified as that of a Pied Honeyeater, was discovered at a point 61 km north-east of Wubin on the Great Northern Highway.

The nest, empty at the time of its discovery, was located in a multiple fork of a hakea *(Hakea scoparia),* and was composed of fairly firm twigs lined with finer twigs and grasses. It was 72 cm from the ground, measured 9 cm across on the outside and 6 cm internally.

When the area was visited again at 10.00 hours on September 13, the nest contained two eggs, which, judging by the behaviour of the female, appeared to be on the point of hatching. This conclusion proved to be correct, as, when the nest was again visited at 07.15 hours on September 14, one egg had hatched, while a further inspection at 10.15 hours showed that the second egg also had hatched. It was noted that the eggshells had been removed from the vicinity of the nest and the female remained in close attendance throughout the period during which the nest was kept under observation. During the same period the male visited the nest site fleetingly, staying only long enough to enable a definite identification to be made.

Therefore, in a period 13 days 21 hours two eggs had been laid and hatched, which on the assumption that they were laid on two consecutive days and that brooding commenced immediately thereafter, indicated an incubation period of not more than 12 days 21 hours.

It may be worth adding, however, that the nesting proved unsuccessful, as on a visit to the area a week later, on September 20, the young had disappeared and the nest itself had been dislodged from the position in which it had been built. There was nothing to indicate the cause of the destruction.

—A. FEWSTER and M. T. MILLARD

First Record of the Kerguelen Diving-Petrel in Australia.—On 20 March, 1974 Mr. N. Whiteford found a recently dead seabird on Middleton Beach, near Albany, Western Australia, and gave it to Mr. H. O. Webster for identification. Realising that it was the first record of a diving-petrel for this State, Mr. Webster kindly donated the specimen to the Western Australian Museum where it was prepared into a study-skin (registered number A12761) and identified as *Pelecanoides exsul* Salvin.

Details of specimen: weight, total length and wing-span in flesh, 120 g, 212 mm and 419 mm respectively; exposed culmen 17, entire culmen 27, width of bill at base 9.3, wing 124.5, tail 45, tarsus 25, middle toe and claw 33; skull fully ossified; feet blue; wings and entire upper surface glossy black. Length of wing and tail are greater than the ranges (118-121.5 and 35-40.5) given for *P. exsul* by R. C. Murphy and F. Harper (A review of the diving petrels, *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.,* 44, 1921: 495-554). In most other respects it agrees well with our specimen (A6673) from Heard Island, a female *exsul* that was brooding an egg on 3 December 1949.

The combination of large size, broad bill with moderately converging sides (rather than narrow bill with almost parallel sides) and broad, unbroken grey band across throat and foreneck separates *P. exsul* from all subspecies of the Common Diving-petrel *(P. urinatrix). P. exsul* nests on

South Georgia, Marion Island, Crozet Islands, Kerguelen Islands, Heard Island, Auckland Islands and Antipodes Islands. As a breeding bird it thus shares with the Georgian Diving-petrel *(P. georgicus)* a more southerly zone than that occupied by *P. urinatrix*.

W. R. P. Bourne (Notes on the diving-petrels, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 88, 1968: 77-85) discusses the possibility that some of Murphy and Harper's subspecies of *P. urinatrix* might be better aligned with *P. exsul*. As the name of one of these subspecies, *berard* Gaimard, antedates *exsul*, the Kerguelen Diving-petrel would be known as *P. berard exsul* if Bourne's hypothesis proves correct.

—G. M. STORR and R. E. JOHNSTONE,
Western Australian Museum.

King Penguin Egg washed ashore in Western Australia.—On 10 January 1974 a large egg, well-covered with a growth of algae, was found on the beach about two miles east of Augusta on the south coast of Western Australia. Three beach fishermen picked it up at high water mark, looked at it, and threw it behind the first line of sand dunes. On 12 January, by sheer chance, I was in Augusta and one of the fishermen, Lew Yates of Bridgetown, mentioned the occurrence to me. With his son and several children I crossed the Blackwood River and walked down the beach approximately to where the men had found the egg. After an hour's searching and when on the point of giving up I found the egg, unbroken, among the sand dune vegetation.

The egg shell was white, although slightly stained, perhaps from the algae. The surface was pitted and the egg was typically penguin in its peg-top shape. Its measurement, 100 x 75 mm, fell within the size range of eggs of the King Penguin *(Aptenodytes patagonica)* as given by Serventy, Serventy and Warham *(The Handbook of Australian Sea-Birds*, 1971) and by Mathews *(Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands and the Australasian South Polar Quadrant, 1928)*. Unfortunately there are no specimens of King Penguin eggs in the Western Australian Museum with which to compare the Augusta egg, but there seems little doubt of its identification as that of a King Penguin, which was confirmed by Mr. T. E. Bush.

I blew the egg for a specimen and was surprised to find that it contained a well-advanced embryo, quite undecomposed and with no odour of decay.

The most reasonable explanation of its presence is that it had been washed into the sea from one of the sub-antarctic nesting colonies in the southern Indian Ocean (Marion I., the Crozets, Kerguelen or Heard Is.). Being in an advanced stage of incubation it floated and was carried eastwards in the West Wind Drift. The egg-laying season of the King Penguin is recorded as between late November and mid-April and Mr. Yates's party must have found the egg almost immediately after it had fetched up on the beach.

The finding of this egg will inevitably revive speculation that the celebrated and mysterious Scott River "Big Egg" had similarly drifted here from Madagascar (its finding was reported in the *West Australian*, May 3, 1962, p. 1, and its origins discussed by R. C. Hyslop and C. J. Spackman, *Augusta Jewel Caves*, 1967, pp. 16-17, and by Harry Butler, *Science Digest*, March 1969, pp. 70-73).

—G. A. LODGE, Boyup Brook.

Breeding of the Larger Spiny-tailed Skink, *Egernia stokesii*.—In early July, 1975 when I was picking mallee roots on my father's farm 14 miles west of Wubin I found two lizards unusual in the district. They were 10 cm long and were at the bottom of an old pile of roots. The soil in the area was a red sandy clay. At school next day they were identified as young *Egernia stokesii*. They were released where found.

Over the next few weeks several other individuals of the species were